

醫學源流論 人參論

The Discourses of Medical Source and Lineage: The Discourse of Ren Shen

By Xu Ling Tai (1693-1771), translated by Allen Tsaur, 10/28/2016

天下之害人者，殺其身未必破其家，破其家未必殺其身。先破人之家而後殺其身者，人參也。

For all things that harm the people, [when they do so,] they may gravely injure the physical body but they may not ruin the family; they may ruin the family but they may not gravely injure the physical body.

There is but one that first ruins the person's family and subsequently gravely injure the physical body – it is Ren Shen.

夫人參用之而當，實能補養元氣，拯救危險，然不可謂天下之死人皆能生之也。其為物氣盛而力厚，不論風寒暑濕痰火鬱結，皆能補塞。故病人如果邪去正衰，用之固宜，或邪微而正亦憊，或邪深而正氣怯弱，不能逐之於外，則於除邪藥中投之，以為驅邪之助。

When Ren Shen is properly utilized, it really can supplement and nourish the Source Qi, rescues one from danger. But one cannot make the assumption that all dying men can be revived [by it].

As a substance, it is strong in Qi (energetic) with a substantial force. No matter if the person has wind, cold, summer-heat, dampness, fire, depression, or binding, [Ren Shen] can be used to supplement and fortify.

Thus, if the patient's pathogen is gone and his Zheng [Qi] is weak, then it is certainly suitable to use it. [Also in cases where] the pathogen has weakened and Zheng [Qi] is exhausted, or the pathogen has lodged deeply and Zheng [Qi] is weak – where [the Zheng Qi] cannot drive out [the pathogen] – if Ren Shen is included in the medicine to expel the pathogen, then it will assist in driving out the pathogen,

然又必審其輕重而後用之，自然有扶危定傾之功。乃不察其有邪無邪，是虛是實，又佐以純補溫熱之品，將邪氣盡行補住，輕者邪氣永不復出，重者即死矣。

One must first examine its appropriateness before utilizing it. With [attentiveness], one will naturally achieve [the task of] protecting [patients] from peril and stabilizing [their] subverting state.

If one does not examine whether there is the presence of pathogen, whether it's vacuous or replete, and further assisting it with warming substances that purely supplement, then it will trap/mend all the pathogenic Qi [within the person]. In mild cases, the pathogenic Qi will never be driven out; in severe cases, the person will die momentarily.

夫醫者之所以遇疾即用，而病家服之死而無悔者何也？

So why is this the case that physicians always utilize [Ren Shen] whenever there is an illness, and patients having no regret dying upon their consumption of this substance?

蓋愚人之心，皆以價貴為良藥，價賤為劣藥，而常人之情，無不好補而惡攻。故服參而死，即使明知其誤，然以為服人參而死，則醫者之力已竭，而人子之心已盡，此命數使然，可以無恨矣。若服攻削之藥而死，即使用死，即使用藥不誤，病實難治，而醫者之罪已不可勝誅矣。

This is due to people's foolish mind, which believes that expensive medicinals must be good and cheap medicinals must be inferior. From the sentiment of the ordinary people, without exception, they favor supplementing and disfavor attacking (purgating).

So when [a person] dies after consuming Ren Shen, even though it is clearly a mistake, people believe that when dying after the consumption of Ren Shen – it means that the physician has done all he could for the patient, and the patient's children have done all they could. This fatality is due to fate, thus there will be no regret.

But in the case when a person dies from taking a purgative, even though there is no mistake and it is the case of an incurable disease, the crime of the physician cannot even be erased by punishments.

故人參者，乃醫家邀功避罪之聖藥也。病家如此，醫家如此，而害人無窮矣。

Thus, Ren Shen is the miraculous herb that enables physicians to take credits and avoid blames. The patients [behave] as such, [and] the physicians [behave] as such – this harms the people without end.

更有駭者，或以用人參為冠冕，或以用人參為有力量。又因其貴重，深信以為必能挽回造化，故毅然用之。孰知人參一用，凡病之有邪者即死。其不死者，亦終身不得愈乎。

In an even more horrifying case, some utilize Ren Shen as chief¹, some believe Ren Shen has certain force; further due to its high value, they sincerely believe that it must be able to bring [a person] back against nature. Thus, they use [Ren Shen] resolutely.

Little did they know, when Ren Shen is used in the presence of pathogenic [Qi], the person will die. [Even if] the person does not perish, he will never be cured for his entire life.

其破家之故何也？

Why is it that the person's family is ruined?

蓋向日之人參，不過一二換，多者三四換，今則其價十倍，其所服又非一錢二錢而止。小康之家，服二三兩而家已蕩然矣。夫人情于死生之際，何求不得，寧恤破家乎！

In the past, [the cost of] Ren Shen was only one or two *Huan*² for [each piece]; even the expensive ones [costed] only three or four *Huan*. Today, the price is more than ten times. In addition, people do not stop consuming it after one or two *Qian*³. Even for a well-off family, after consuming 2-3 *Liang*⁴ [of Ren

¹ Or "as decoration." It literally means "the official hat."

² I do not know how much it is, or what type of currency unit it is.

³ 1 *Qian* = 3.69 grams

⁴ 1 *Liang* = 36.9 grams

Shen], the family is all but destroyed. During a life-and-death situation, people will do all they can to do something, even to the degree of ruining the family.

醫者全不一念，輕將人參立方，用而不遵，在父為不慈，在子為不孝，在夫婦昆弟為忍心害理。并有親戚雙友，責罰痛罵，即使明知無益，姑以此塞責。

又有孝子慈父，俸其或生，竭力以謀之。遂使貧窶之家，病或稍愈，一家終身凍餒。若仍不救，棺殮俱無，賣妻鬻子，全家覆敗。

When a physician is without a pure intention, he may carelessly crafts a formula with Ren Shen.

If [the patient] does not follow [the directives]; for the [patient's] father, he is without fatherly kindness; for the [patient's] son, he is without filial piety; for [the patient's] spouse or sibling(s), how could they tolerate harms being done [to the patient]? For his relatives and friends in both genders, they will blame, punish, and shout at [the patient]. Even if they know [the therapy] is futile, they will still shift the blame [to the patient not following the directive].

For the filial pious sons or compassionate fathers, just for the blind chance of survival, they will exhaust their effort to get it. So they fall into poverty. Even if the illness improves slightly, the entire family is to suffer cold and hunger all their lives. At this degree, if [the patient] still cannot be saved, then they are not even [able to afford] coffins. Wives and children are sold [into servitude]. The entire family has collapsed and failed.

醫者誤治，殺人可恕，而逞己之意，日日害人破家，其惡甚于盜賊，可不慎哉！

When a physician mistakenly provides an adverse treatment and causes fatality, it can be forgiven; however, [a physician] with his egotistic/stubborn intentions, who harms people and ruins families every day, his evil is worse than that of thieves and bandits. Must not one be cautious?

吾願天下之人，斷不可以人參為起死回生之藥，而必服之。

醫者必審其病，實係純虛，非參不治，服必萬全，然後用之。又必量其家業尚可以支持，不至用參之後，死生無靠。然後節省用之，一以惜物力，一以全人之命，一以保人之家。如此存心，自然天降之福。

若如近日之醫，殺命破家于人不知之地，恐天之降禍，亦在人不知之地也，可不慎哉。

I wish that everyone in the world can stop their belief that Ren Shen must be consumed because it is a medicinal that can revive one from death.

Physicians must examine the disease. It is only if the [the disease] is a purely vacuous [pattern], that it cannot be treated without Ren Shen, that if there is no risk after consumption, then he will use it.

Then he must consider if the wealth of the family can support [the treatment]. So that after the consumption of Ren Shen, [the patient] will not fall to a state of insecurity in his livelihood.

Further, he should be using it sparingly. Firstly, it is to spare the [limited] resource. Secondly, it is to safeguard a person's life. Thirdly, it is to protect a person's family. With such intention, he will naturally receive fortunes that descend from the Heaven.

But for the contemporary physicians, they murder lives and destroy families in ignorance... I am afraid that for the perils ahead of them, they are still in a state of ignorance.

Must not one be cautious?